

FARM, FOREST AND OPEN SPACE LAND VALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

1:00 PM

USDA/NRCS Conference Room

60 Quaker Lane

Warwick, RI 02886

Ken Ayars called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm.

In attendance were: Ken Ayars, Dick Went, Linda Cwiek, Suzanne Kogut, Charlene Randall, Chris Modisette, James Savage, Tom Abbott, Al Bettencourt, Steve Swallow, Mike Moorman, Harriett Powell, Ramona LeBlanc.

I. Minutes

Reviewed and accepted as corrected: the date of the meeting changed to April 2, 2008; Suzanne/Linda, unanimous.

II. Review of Methodology/Recommended Values

The methodology used to determine the recommended values for lands enrolled under the Farm designation will be based on statistics from the 2007 USDA Census for Agriculture. However, that information was only released on February 4th and is not widely available.

The subcommittee had previously voted to keep the same methodology to determine recommended values for Forestry lands as had been adopted previously. The formula has been recalculated with latest available data (2006) and results in a significant increase. A variety of possibilities as to the cause of the increase were discussed and the question was raised as to whether further review was required. The consensus of the subcommittee was that the methodology was established and reliable and the new values, therefore, are too.

Recommended values for Open Space lands are based on a percentage of the assessed value and those percentages will not change.

A motion was made that, in order to submit recommended values in a timely manner, the subcommittee should forward to the State Conservation Committee new recommended values for Forest, recommended values based on the same percentage of assessed value for Open Space and to withhold recommended values for Farm

until the latest data could be incorporated into the formula (which will be done within 30 days).

Concern was raised that there might be a legal requirement to hold public hearings before any changes to recommended values are adopted. Ken has submitted this question to DEM's legal council and is awaiting a response. A subsequent motion was made to submit Forest and Open Space recommendations to the SCC, to update the Farm recommendation using the established methodology and to meet within 30 days to determine new Farm values, pending a ruling to determine if public hearings are required: Suzanne/ Dick: unanimous.

The next meeting of the FFOS subcommittee will be within 30 days of the date of this meeting.

III. Future Agenda Items

A. Recommended Farm Values

B. Golf Course Case Ruling

C. Workshop for Assessors

IV. Other

Once property is enrolled in the Farm portion of the FFOS program, there is no mechanism in place to review how the acreage is being used. Forestry lands are reviewed every 5 years and recertification is

required based on how forestry management plans have been implemented.

Landowners are required to apply for conservation plans, but currently NRCS is unable to perform those plans on every application. Properties that come under contract with NRCS do have conservation plans which are reviewed annually.

Ken will discuss what role the Conservation Districts can play to improve the FFOS program with the SCC. NRCS may have limited funding available through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership program to pay the districts to conduct these plans or to train someone from the districts to do them. In this case, a fee would be charged to the landowner for the completion of the plans as is the case in the Forestry program with consultants being hired by landowners to develop forest management plans.

A motion to adjourn was made at 2:10: Dick/Jim, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Ramona LeBlanc